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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 008740

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: DESPITE REFORM EFFORTS, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY
WARY OF NEW GOT

REF: ANKARA 8586

Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons 1.5 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Turkey's three leading human rights organizations are wary of the new GOT, despite its nascent reform efforts (reftel). One of the groups, which is Islam-oriented, suspects the ruling AK Party will avoid promoting Islamic rights; the others, leftist and Kurdish oriented, fear AK will pursue a hidden Islamic agenda at their expense. A controversial police inspector report may present the first test of the GOT's commitment to progress on human rights. End Summary.

MAZLUM-DER: AK IGNORING ISLAMIC ISSUES

[1](#)2. (C) Yilmaz Ensaroglu, chairman of Mazlum-Der, an Islam-oriented human rights organization, told poloff he is not convinced that the ruling AK Party, despite its perceived Islamist roots, will promote religious freedom. He said AK leaders are making every effort to avoid issues related to Islam, such as the wearing of headscarves in universities and government offices. He noted that the new government includes more ministers formerly from the center-right ANAP party than from the (now closed) Islamist Fazilet Party. Even the openly Islamist former PM Erbakan made no progress on the rights of Muslims -- during his brief tenure large numbers of students were expelled from universities for wearing Islamic headcover -- and it is unlikely AK will do better. The GOT's proposed legislative reform package does not appear to include many Islam-related issues. AK Party, he said, appears more focused on staying in power than on promoting the rights of pious Muslims.

[1](#)3. (C) When pressed, however, Ensaroglu acknowledged there are indications the new administration could be more supportive of human rights reform than its predecessor, even if reform is not focused on Islamic issues. He is very pleased that DPM Yalcinbayir was given the human rights portfolio. He said Yalcinbayir was a strong advocate of human rights reform during his tenure on the parliamentary Constitutional Committee, often clashing with ANAP leader Mesut Yilmaz, who was less supportive of human rights in Ensaroglu's view. The current 550-member Parliament includes 10-15 deputies sensitive to human rights issues; if the right people are selected for the key committees, they could make an impact. He said an "outrageous" report by police inspectors released November 28 presents the new administration with its first human rights test. The report absolves police officers from charges of beating a student during a November demonstration in Ankara, despite the fact that the incident was captured by TV cameras, and instead blames the police official who freed the student. He said the government's response to this travesty will provide an indication of its sincerity.

HRA/HRF: AK HAS HIDDEN ISLAMIC AGENDA

[1](#)4. (C) Husnu Ondul, chairman of the leftist, Kurdish oriented Human Rights Association, and Yavuz Onen, chairman of the Human Rights Foundation (affiliated with the Association) view the issue of AK and Islam from the opposite angle. They suspect AK has a hidden Islamic agenda. Obviously, they argue, AK is planning Islam-related reforms, but no one knows what they are. Ondul was the most dismissive of the proposed reform package, asserting that no administration could introduce a package without the endorsement of the Deep State. New legislation might look good on paper, but would not be faithfully implemented. Onen noted that the reform

package did not appear to address many Kurdish issues, or the problems of the southeast in general. AK does not have a good image among the Kurds, having opposed previous reforms relating to Kurdish language rights.

COMMENT

15. (C) Though HRA, HRF, and Mazlum-Der are broad-based, nationwide organizations, each has a discrete agenda. They are reluctant to recognize reforms not focused on the issues most important for their members. They are also understandably skeptical of AK's ability to implement its proposals, having been burned by past reform efforts that failed to live up to expectations.
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